

feeling of independence and equality that distinguishes us; hence that pride of character, that self-respect, that give us ascendancy when we come in contact with Northerners. It is a distinction to be a Southerner, as it was once to be a Roman citizen. . . .

Questions

1. What are Fitzhugh's main criticisms of "free society"?
2. Why does he present an analogy between the condition of slaves and that of women?

68. Letter by a Fugitive Slave (1840)

Source: Joseph Taper: excerpts from "Letter from Joseph Taper to Joseph Long, November 11, 1840" in the Joseph Long Papers located in the Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University. Reprinted by permission.

No one knows how many slaves succeeded in escaping from bondage before the Civil War. Some who managed to do so settled in northern cities like Boston, Cincinnati, and New York. But because federal law required that fugitives be returned to slavery, many continued northward until they reached Canada.

One successful fugitive was Joseph Taper, a slave in Frederick County, Virginia, who in 1837 ran away to Pennsylvania with his wife and children. Two years later, learning that a "slave catcher" was in the neighborhood, the Tapers fled to Canada. In 1840, Taper wrote to a white acquaintance in Virginia recounting some of his experiences. The Biblical passage to which Taper refers reads: "And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts."

DEAR SIR,

I now take the opportunity to inform you that I am in a land of liberty, in good health. . . . I have paid 50 dollars rent this year: next year I expect to build. The Queen of England has granted 50 acres of land to every colored man who will accept of the gift, and become an actual settler. Also a yoke of oxen and plough, for every two families. This is a very great encouragement to those who have come here for the liberty which God had designed for them. . . .

Since I have been in the Queen's dominions I have been well contented, Yes well contented for Sure, man is as God intended he should be. That is, all are born free and equal. This is a wholesome law, not like the Southern laws which puts man made in the image of God, on level with brutes. O, what will become of the people, and where will they stand in the day of Judgment. Would that the 5th verse of the 3d chapter of Malachi were written as with the bar of iron, and the point of a diamond upon every oppressor's heart that they might repent of this evil, and let the oppressed go free. . . .

We have good schools, and all the colored population supplied with schools. My boy Edward who will be six years next January, is now reading, and I intend keeping him at school until he becomes a good scholar.

I have enjoyed more pleasure within one month here than in all my life in the land of bondage. . . . My wife and self are sitting by a good comfortable fire happy, knowing that there are none to molest [us] or make [us] afraid. God save Queen Victoria. The Lord bless her in this life, and crown her with glory in the world to come is my prayer,

Yours With much respect
most obt, Joseph Taper

Excerpted From:

Foner, E. (2011). *Voices of freedom: A documentary history* (3rd ed.). New York: W.W. Norton & Co.